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Medusa Redux

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MEDUSA REDUX

You were of two minds about everything—
country or city, teaching or retirement, lesbian
or straight sex. When you judged
that poetry contest and couldn't choose
between two finalists (male or female)

and we used my Magic 8 Ball to pick
the winner (male), you made me promise
never to tell. Just as, years earlier, when I was
your student and you showed me a poem
you wrote about screwing my classmate (male)

you whispered *secret, secret*. Your skirt
bunched up around your hips was one of its
images. Your pull always had a push,
your sweetness a sting. "Disingenuous
former mentor," is what I dubbed you

in a poem. Why, knowing that, did I
let you back in my life? Bring you to my
city, champion you to my own students,
expose them to your threadbare workshop style:
spurious nurturing, ingratiating praise.

When I called you the day my dog died,
you said, "I don't know what you expect
me to say." Your obdurate rebuff put
me off. Then, at Starbucks, as I reiterated
how much pain I was in, you sat mute,

stone-faced. Furious at my grief for
keeping me from you. Who would fix
your computer glitches? Or placate your
complaints about your editor, your book
designer, the director of your low-residency?

Or help unstick you from your latest
mess (an affair with a married man)?
So you ran to my colleagues, my students,
my friends—to anyone who would
listen—with your self-deflecting, under-

mining chant: *What's wrong with David?*
Thus, during the hardest loss of my life,
your resentment twisted, hissed behind
my back. At that reading, the last time
I *had* to see you, I waited till I was ready to

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leave, till the crowd thinned a path. I walked
up, looked in your eyes—those hopeless
windows—and said, “Goodbye.” I knew
from your stricken expression that you knew:
I was through with you. After I left the room,

your tears (it was later conveyed) coerced
bystanders to comfort you. At our closest,
we joked that we’d been soul mates in a past
life: husband and wife reciting poems
to each other in a cabin in the woods.

Now, in my mind’s eye, I see a woman
wrapped in a peasant shawl, hands red
with the blood of her dead children,
moaning *What did I do? What did I do?*
She disappears into the Black Forest.

DAVID TRINIDAD

I see you (one of our last encounters), caught
for a heartbeat like an animal on a dark road,
eyes flashing from martyr-pain to self-
righteous rage, then bolting, to avoid me,
towards an exit I knew was locked.